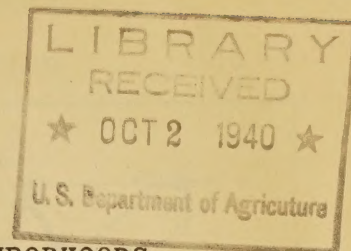


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics



REPORT OF A RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY OF NEIGHBORHOODS
AND COMMUNITIES OF CASWELL COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

By

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Area V

Cooperative study between Caswell County Land Use Planning Committee
and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics

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The purpose of the reconnaissance survey of neighborhood and community groupings of the rural population of Caswell County, North Carolina, was to discover and map the groupings of farm men and women which would provide the most practical basis for the organization of community land use planning committees.

How the Social Groups were Identified and Mapped

This report consists of observations made and information received in the course of brief informal interviews with persons met at cross-roads stores and in a few farm homes in different parts of the county, supplemented by suggestions from personnel of the County Agent's office, the office of the Superintendent of Schools, and county church groups.

Primary attention was given in this short study to the mapping of areas within which the farm families felt a distinct sense of mutual belonging, expressed through a stated willingness to meet together to discuss openly their agricultural problems. Secondary attention was paid to the nature and personnel of the leadership of these groups, and to the tie or ties that apparently contributed to the feeling of oneness or of mutual belonging.

Each person was asked to give the most common name for the area, to locate on a map just how far the neighborhood extended in each direction, to describe the organizational and institutional situation, to name the larger center to which the neighborhood was most closely attached, to give the names of other neighborhoods that are most closely associated with this neighborhood, and give the nature and extent of such association.

General Observations

The general observations resulting from the study are as follows:

(1) The rural white population of the county can apparently be grouped into about 40 fairly distinct neighborhoods, which in turn can be grouped into 9 rather clearly defined larger communities.

(2) The neighborhood groups seem to satisfy best the quest for local groups of farm people who would like to meet together, who could easily do so, who would tend to express themselves freely together in meeting, who could

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designate one of their group to represent them on the community committee, and who would all together provide the most representative cross-section of information on farm conditions and problems in the country. This statement is based on information received from various persons to the effect that

(a) lack of transportation facilities interferes with the attendance of many farm families at general public meetings held in the township center;

(b) in some cases distance itself tends to limit the use of transportation facilities that are available;

(c) lack of concern with general township agricultural matters that do not have an immediate money consideration or other pressing significance tends to prevent attendance;

(d) whatever leaders may be among the farm neighborhoods of lower economic, tenure, or farm-size status either do not attend the larger community meetings, or yield silently to more dominant leaders who usually come from the neighborhoods of higher economic and tenure status, or for other reasons do not take vocal part in the larger group meetings;

(e) the smaller "natural" neighborhood groups, whether of higher or lower economic and tenure status, do tend to have their own local leaders, who are vocal in the informal neighborhood group meetings;

(f) local neighborhood groups do tend to have their problems and opinions, which may differ from those of the most dominant neighborhoods and which, for reasons outlined above, are not likely to be represented in larger community or township meetings, but which should appear in any representative statement of county agricultural problems and program proposal.

(3) The nine communities in the county consist of clusters of neighborhoods so grouped as to provide these neighborhoods with the maximum number of common interests, these interests actually contributing to the feeling of community loyalty and association. The communities tend to reflect a compromise between political voting precincts, consolidated school districts, and natural segregation due to topography and distance as influenced by transportation development like paved highways, et cetera.

In the main, the consolidated school district, topography, and paved-road connections were stronger in determining the community lines than were the political boundaries or the store-service areas for small merchandise. A majority of the communities had community lines that coincided roughly with and were strengthened by township political lines and interests. But in two communities, and in parts of other communities, the natural community lines conflicted definitely with the township political boundaries. A township meeting in these two townships would have, therefore, to deal with the problems of communities which extended perhaps half their length or width into other townships and so would necessarily be represented in two or more township meetings. Split and double community representation would thus result.

Tentative Recommendations

If the observations in this report are acceptable as tentative facts and are to be related to the Land Use Planning Program, they would take the form of the following provisional recommendations:

- (1) That the neighborhood have a representative on the community committee and that it be made the basis unit for democratic discussion groups and representative group sources of information because of
 - (a) the more intimate and personal qualities of neighborhood relationships;
 - (b) the greater ease of attending group meetings;
 - (c) the probable greater homogeneity of the neighborhood population in terms of socio-economic and tenure status;
 - (d) the greater daily association and exchange of ideas;
 - (e) the greater opportunity to obtain local participation and to develop effective leadership in neighborhoods otherwise inadequately represented in larger community meetings;
 - (f) the necessity of having represented the problems and opinions of operators of the smaller farms, and of lower income and tenure status, who are frequently grouped on the neighborhood basis;
 - (g) the necessity of developing the feeling of local responsibility for local neighborhood problems, so that work can be more easily apportioned among individuals as these responsibilities are, by their nature, individual in character.
- (2) That, as the first step in the development of the Land Use Planning Program within a county, the neighborhood and communities be located, and their boundaries be outlined as well as possible on a map, with due consideration for changing forces that may alter community or neighborhood loyalties, association, and boundaries in the future.
- (3) That a major effort be made, where necessary, to establish neighborhood centers or meeting places to take the place of local schoolhouses that are abolished by school consolidations. In many neighborhoods, lodge buildings and churches may be used with the expectation of large neighborhood participation. Light and heat are real factors but the need can be met if it is appreciated. Many neighborhoods are so situated that the consolidated schoolhouse can serve, even though it be in an adjacent neighborhood.
- (4) That the neighborhood farmer leaders be found, and that their help be enlisted to develop interest and get widespread neighborhood participation in the neighborhood Land Use Planning discussion meetings.

(5) That the community be made the next larger unit for Land Use Planning discussion and program development, the community being defined as a cluster of neighborhoods which actually have more interests in common than the neighborhoods would have if grouped in any other way.

In Caswell County, the school building in the consolidated school district seems to provide not only a necessary heated and lighted meeting place but also a common bond for adults through their children and Parent-Teachers' Associations. The bond of common political participation in the political precinct does not seem to equal the bond of feeling provided by the common school but in most communities in the county the bond of association in the common consolidated school district is reinforced by it.

However, in two communities and in parts of other communities in the county, the natural community lines conflict definitely with the township political boundaries, so that a township meeting in these two townships would have to deal with the problems of communities that extend perhaps half their length or width into other townships and that would necessarily be represented in two or more township meetings. Split and double community representation or inadequate neighborhood representation may thus result. This may be advisable for certain transactions but as a community has been defined as a group of neighborhoods having their maximum number of interests in common and having a sense of community loyalty and cohesion, it would seem best to minimize the duplication and splitting of community participation. Certainly nonparticipation of neighborhoods that overlap other township lines should be prevented.

Common-store service areas seem to be even less significant as a bond for the larger community. Ease of association, influenced by topography and transportation routes, seems important, but has usually been considered in the routing of school busses and in the delineation of consolidated school districts.

(6) That additional personnel, with training and background sufficient for the task, be made available cooperatively by the Extension Service and the Division of State and Local Planning of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics to make possible the infusion of the Land Use Planning Process at the level where it is most needed, that is, at the neighborhood level.

(7) Finally, that consideration be given to the existing leadership patterns within each neighborhood and community so as to have the community committees composed of persons who can speak for a definite group and expect support and action from the group.

White Communities and Neighborhoods of Caswell County

Yanceyville Community

By far the largest of the communities and forming the center of the county, geographically, economically, and culturally, the Yanceyville Community comprises seven distinct white neighborhoods, and one area so heavily Negro in population that it can scarcely be included within any white neighborhood. Good road connections, consolidated school attendance areas, and the political and economic attraction of the Yanceyville town center draw the neighborhoods surrounding the town within its area of community feeling. These factors account in large part for the inclusion of neighborhoods or parts of neighborhoods in the Yanceyville larger community which would tend otherwise, perhaps, to identify themselves with other community centers.

The best example of this tendency is found in the Locust Hill Neighborhood, located on a long ridge extending southwest from Yanceyville through two other townships (voting precincts). The facility of pupil transportation and of trading from Locust Hill to Yanceyville inclined the neighborhood residents to identify themselves with Yanceyville rather than with either of the larger communities lying to the north or to the south. Topographic factors encouraged this tendency by separating Locust Hill from these adjacent communities by Country Line Creek on the south and an area of swamp land to the northwest. Because of its weekly services, Yanceyville also draws church attendance from its surrounding neighborhoods, which otherwise represent independent church attendance areas.

The Locust Hill neighborhood has its own country stores, but its local loyalty is fundamentally religious and social in character. Most of the white farm families are fairly large landholders. They are active members of the same church, which supports a number of organizations, in particular a Home Demonstration or Women's Club having considerable vigor and activity. It is pertinent to note that the Club nominally serves the whole area included in the Locust Hill township or voting precinct but, in reality, residents of the adjacent Pleasant Grove, Bethesda, and Allison Hodges neighborhoods also within the precinct, do not participate to any extent in the Club. This probably indicates the barrier presented by the religious auspices of the Club.

Prospect Neighborhood centers in its church and country store. The residents are mostly owners on medium-to small-sized farms. Local loyalty based on locality and church ties is strong despite the nearness to the county seat, Yanceyville.

White's Store Neighborhood loyalties are based only on the country store and sense of local adjacency of farmsteads. Church membership is split among three denominations. About half the farm families are tenants. Probably because of school-attendance and trade-center attraction, the neighborhood regards itself as more closely associated with Yanceyville than with Providence.

Montgomery Road is a neighborhood lying along a ridge road. The basis of local loyalty is mostly the geographic distinction created by creek valleys on both sides, which join at one end. School, church, and trades relationships are carried on in Yanceyville.

Hamer Neighborhood is similar to Montgomery Road, except that it possesses its local church and country store.

Pleasant Grove Neighborhood is fairly well geographically determined by Country Line and South Country Line creeks on the west, separating it from Yanceyville, and a tributary of Hyco Creek which separates Pleasant Grove from Union Ridge on the east. The sense of locality is further heightened by the concentration of farmsteads in and near the crossroads center. Trade proximity, school attendance, and the opportunity for weekly church attendance draw the neighborhood closer to Yanceyville than to Leasburg. The voting-precinct line splits the neighborhood in half and thus renders representation of the neighborhood on the precinct basis rather anomalous.

Yanceyville Neighborhood consists mainly of the village of Yanceyville but includes a few scattered farm families along the highway leading south, who get all their institutional services from Yanceyville and look to it as their social center.

Milton Community

Milton Community comprises four neighborhoods with divergent neighborhood bonds or bases. They are of unequal strength and distinctiveness. In addition, there is an area, marked Estelle on the map, which is so heavily Negro in population that it can scarcely be considered as part of a white neighborhood. Milton is a small neighborhood of old settlers, generally large landowners, bound together chiefly by tradition, habit of association, church, and trade associations. Barker's Neighborhood, across Country Line Creek, distinguishes itself from both Milton and Semora by its church institutions, loyalties, and social status. The high school is located half way between Milton and Semora. The families living immediately surrounding the school feel little bound to either of the two neighborhoods. In Semora the neighborhood feeling depends upon its earlier development as a distinct rural trade center and church congregation. Taylor's Store centers in a country store serving a concentration of small farms. The consolidated school and common voting precinct are slender bonds of loyalty uniting the neighborhoods in a larger community.

Leasburg Community

Leasburg Community consists of two rather independent ridge neighborhoods, Union Ridge and Leasburg, bound together by consolidated-school attendance, the trade ties centering in Leasburg, a common voting precinct, and the town church in Leasburg. Hyco Creek causes geographical segregation of the neighborhoods, and considerable local loyalty results. The voting-precinct boundaries exceed the natural community area to the west, including a part of Pleasant Grove whose ties, however, are closer with Yanceyville Community.

Hightowers Community

Hightowers Community consists of four neighborhoods, three of which are centered in both country stores and churches. One of these, Hightowers Neighborhood, is given a further sense of distinction because it is separated by Hyco Creek from Prospect Hill. Prospect Hill is probably the strongest neighborhood, with Ridgeville and Hightowers competing for second place. Corbett feels itself rather distinct because of its separation from Prospect Hill by Lynch Creek, but it is institutionally somewhat dependent upon Prospect Hill. The larger community of Hightowers coincides, by and large, with the voting-precinct boundaries and with the attendance area of the consolidated school at Prospect Hill. The binding factors in the Hightowers larger community are the common voting precinct and consolidated school at Prospect Hill.

Anderson Community

Anderson Community, conforming in area to the township by that name in the south-central part of the county, consists of four neighborhoods of the country-store-locality type, one pronounced religious neighborhood, and a small area in its northeast corner which is predominantly Negro and therefore not a white neighborhood. Baynes, Anderson, Dabb's Store, and Oliver's Store are neighborhoods very similar in character. Their only apparent bases of self-identification are their country-store centers and the local concentration of farms, caused by the natural soil and topographic distribution. Churches, instead of causing neighborhood exclusiveness, apparently tend to erase neighborhood lines, for church attendance areas do not coincide to any appreciable extent with neighborhood boundaries. The consolidated high school is a common denominator and, as a convenient heated and lighted meeting place, tends to break down neighborhood distinctions. A fairly cooperative feeling seems to exist among the neighborhoods. The community feeling is further strengthened by the coincidence with political township lines, the common voting precinct furnishing the specific bond.

Aldridge Neighborhood, on the other hand, represents a much more isolated and exclusive neighborhood type. It is religiously distinct in that its residents are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ("Mormon"). The church and neighborhood boundaries circumscribe, for the most part, the realm of social participation and association of its members.

Stony Creek Community

Stony Creek is more an area than it is a community. Natural geographic boundaries, Country Line Creek on the north and Towns Creek on the east, are reflected in the apparent limits to the social identification of its residents. The northern boundary of the political township of Stony Creek includes area that is socially identified with the community feeling. Three areas within the larger community are so heavily Negro in population that they scarcely comprise white neighborhoods. Of the four remaining neighborhoods Cherry Grove is by far the strongest, depending not only upon its local store center, but upon the memories of an apparently well-institutionalized society of an earlier

date. Miles Store and Sommers Store are now merely skeleton neighborhoods, apparently chiefly tenant in population and socially antagonistic to Cherry Grove. Robertsons is composed to a larger extent of owner operators. Churches again draw from well beyond neighborhood lines and bind rather than separate neighborhoods. In Cherry Grove is located the consolidated grammar school for this and the Anderson communities.

Dan River Community

Providence, Purley, and Blanch comprise the three fairly independent neighborhoods of Dan River larger community. The larger community identity is based almost entirely upon the consolidated grade school at Providence, where there are likewise two country stores, and churches. Some of the Purley residents attend the same churches as families from White's Store. Purley, however, has its country store center and almost a village identity. Blanch is similarly independent, with its country store and local church.

Cobb's School Community

Cobb's School Community consists of several rather distinct and strongly self-conscious neighborhoods. The Bethesda, Cobb's School or Blackwell, the Pleasant Grove or Tinkertown, and the Allison-Hodges neighborhoods are religiously and socially distinctive. The residents in all the neighborhoods, with the exception of Allison-Hodges, are to a considerable extent owner operators. Geographic features like creeks and ridges have helped to build and maintain the sense of local distinction and loyalty. Allison-Hodges neighborhood is heavily kin in composition. The only binding association for the larger community seems to be the common consolidated school near Blackwell. In community meetings, Pleasant Grove and Allison-Hodges seem less inclined to participate. Although falling into the Pelham Township voting precinct, Cobb's School or Blackwell Neighborhood is socially in no way related to the rest of Pelham Township residents. The same applies to the part of Cobb's School Community that falls geographically within the Locust Hill Township voting precinct. As noted above, the association between residents of the Pleasant Grove, Bethesda, and Allison-Hodges neighborhoods with the residents of Locust Hill neighborhood is negligible.

Pelham Community

This community was insufficiently surveyed for accurate description. Hogan's Creek separates it socially as well as geographically from the Cobb's School Community, although some residents of Pelham go to Providence in Dan River Community for church. Proximity to the trade center in Danville, Virginia, and the infiltration of rural-resident industrial workers from Danville mills and businesses have broken down to a considerable extent the neighborhood identity of the northern portion of Pelham Community. Local church loyalty on the road between Pelham and Gatewood has been a sustaining bond for the remaining farm families.

